How Teens and Basketball are Keeping the Peace in RVA

Preventing gun violence in our communities feels like a big task, but according to DeVone Boggan it’s not as difficult as we think. At our annual event Mr. Boggan shared some provocative ideas with our audience. When answering a question from the audience about how to secure funding for gun violence prevention work DeVone said, “We already have the money, the same money being spent to put and keep over 2 million individuals in prison across the U.S. The question is do we choose to spend it on that or do we spend it on preventative programming that keeps them out of jail in the first place.”

Mr. Boggan flew to Richmond, VA from Richmond, CA, where he serves as the founder and CEO of Advance Peace, which works to “interrupt gun violence in U.S. urban neighborhoods by providing transformational opportunities to young men involved in lethal firearm offenses and placing them in a high-touch, personalized fellowship.” At the invitation of Virginia LISC and Richmond Police Department, DeVone served as our keynote speaker at LISC’s Innovative Safety Strategies Breakfast on September 26. The crowd was so engaged by DeVone’s words that Richmond Police Chief Alfred Durham decided to cancel police department programming that afternoon and the next day to hold meetings where DeVone could share his work with other officers and partners.

Keynote speaker, DeVone Boggan speaks to the audience about his work to combat gun violence in Richmond, CA.

Mr. Boggan’s presentation was the perfect complement to the primary focus of the event; to celebrate two of our partners for their high impact work to foster safety and peace in the communities they serve: Richmond Peace Education Center (RPEC) and VA League for Safer Streets (the League).

Virginia LISC takes a holistic approach to helping the neighborhoods we serve build strong communities. That approach is anchored in developing important partnerships that are responding to community needs beyond infrastructural investments and development. RPEC and the League are at the forefront of addressing safety in Richmond and are both applying innovative strategies to do so! ... continued on page 3
Investing in Community through Returning Citizens

Success is often defined by data, outcomes, numbers, and statistics; other times it can be defined by a single individual, whose personal success story is just as demonstrative as any data point. Individual success is an important component of Virginia LISC’s work, especially as it relates to the outcomes for individuals served by our Financial Opportunity Centers (FOCs). FOCs are career and financial coaching service centers that help low-to moderate-income people build smart money habits and focus on the financial bottom line. At each FOC, clients can seek support from coaches who are experts trained in three support areas: employment, finances, and benefits. One of Virginia LISC’s three FOC’s is housed at the Neighborhood Resource Center of Greater Fulton (NRC), who recently shared a really incredible success story with us that greatly illustrates how FOCs and the coaches can have incredible impact for community members, empowering individuals to reach their financial goals.

In December of 2017, Joe Bush was released from the state penitentiary. Mr. Bush was eager to find work and create a new life for himself, despite the challenges he faced as an ex-offender. He was seeking several resources and decided to visit NRC. After outfitting Joe with some basic but essential needs like housewares through CARITAS for his newly secured home, NRC worked with him on next steps. Employment was the best place to start and he began working with the NRC employment coach, Sharon Overton. The pair worked to develop his cover letter and resume so that he could quickly begin applying for work. “Mr. Bush is fully committed to the FOC program. He has participated fully and is open to all the coaching he has received from the NRC team,” NRC Financial Coach Julia Horrocks said. Prior to serving his prison sentence, Mr. Bush worked as a barber. Now he is lined up to take the Barbers License exam and in the interim has been able to identify meaningful work in a full time position. “I would walk by the NRC every day to take my niece and nephew to their bus stop! One day I decided to walk in to see what the NRC was all about. I am glad that I did, because everyone has been a huge help to me and I don’t know what I would have done without them,” Mr. Bush said of his experience working with NRC.

The NRC FOC has seen great success and our partnership with NRC of Greater Fulton is a strong one. Mr. Bush’s story in particular, highlights how important this work is to all residents in our community. “When we talk about our work to support residents that includes returning citizens. Folks coming back into our neighborhoods after serving time are individuals who can give back to their community just as much as other community members. Mr. Bush is a great example of this point; his success and work with NRC demonstrates that investing in returning citizens can and will make the entire community strong,” Virginia LISC’s Neighborhood Partnerships Manager, Shekinah Mitchell, said.

Mr. Bush is on a path to success and we look forward to cheering him on, as he continues down the path to achieve his financial, personal and employment goals!

For more information about the Virginia LISC FOC Network, please contact Shekinah Mitchell at 804.505.4697 or smitchell@lisc.org.

### Financial Opportunity Centers by the Numbers

**January – September 2018**

**REACH:**
- 353 people have received coaching services
- 130 new people started receiving FOC services
- Year-to-date bundling rate is 91.25%
  - Employment coaching: 290
  - Income supports coaching: 255
  - Financial coaching: 244

**IMPACT:**
- Although financial gains generally take 12-18 months; 43% of clients receiving financial coaching have seen gains in income, credit score or net worth in 2018.
- Of the clients looking for employment in 2018, 69% have been placed in a job with the average starting hourly rate of $12.
- The total value of newly approved or re-approved income supports for FOC clients in 2018 totals over $231,000. On average, this totals $905 in extra support for food, housing assistance, education, childcare and more.
Peace in RVA Continued

RPEC began its work in Richmond in 1980, serving as “an unwavering voice for peaceful conflict resolution, social justice, and nonviolent social change in the Richmond, Virginia region.” Since its foundation, it has achieved much and evolved to meet RVA’s changing safety needs. One of the programs that RPEC implements, in partnership with LISC, is a new place-based program that stems from their greater Richmond region work with teens; that program, called Jackson Ward Youth Peace Team, is working with teens living in Gilpin Court, empowering them to be advocates for peace and positive change in their community. Teen participants go through months of training in conflict resolution, meditation, yoga, music and the arts. Initially the program was called Gilpin Court Youth Peace Team but the teens asked to rename it to Jackson Ward, which was an important opportunity for them to define themselves, their neighborhood, and program goals.

VA League for Safer Streets (the League) is a new organization on the RVA scene. The League was founded by Paul Taylor and Jawad Abdu in 2016 after both men were released from prison. The two collectively served nearly 40 years in the penitentiary and upon release were both motivated to give back to their community. With a shared love for the game of basketball, Paul and Jawad (with invaluable support from their partner, Robert Morris) were inspired to “unite families and - and reduce crime with basketball as the draw.” Focusing on high-crime neighborhoods including public housing communities in Richmond, the League recruits young men (ages 17 – 28) to join a basketball team. Teams then play against one another two nights a week; the catch is, that in order to play, players must attend workshops prior to each game. The workshops focus on conversations about mental health, family, and substance abuse – all issues that the young men are experiencing and want support around. During the league sessions, there was marked reduction in crime, and there were no homicides in any of the public housing communities on nights that the games were played. Now in its second year the League has 17 teams, the highest number of teams since they began, indicating the growing interest by young men in these communities to have a safe place to be and get connected to supportive resources. The league includes teams representing Richmond City Police officers and the Richmond Sheriff’s office; Richmond Fire Department has great interest in starting a team, as well!

The breakfast event, held at Virginia Union University’s Living & Learning Center, had over 130 community residents, activists, nonprofits, and business leaders attend – a diverse crowd all there with a shared belief in creating safe neighborhoods in Richmond. Thank you to all of our event sponsors; VHDA, Williams Mullen, BB&T, Office of the Attorney General, Wells Fargo, Fulton Bank, and Baskervill.

To see videos showcasing the work of RPEC and the League, visit our website: http://www.virginialisc.org/media-room/videos/

To see additional photos from the event, visit https://www.flickr.com/gp/167352683@N02/00803R

Housing Highlight: Maintaining Affordable Housing on the Northside

Virginia LISC and its community development partners have reduced blight and abandonment and put vacant residential properties in Richmond back into productive use in the Northside.

To continue that work, Virginia LISC is always looking for investment opportunities that will increase affordable housing in Richmond. Working with our long time neighborhood partner, the Better Housing Coalition, LISC is providing a $750,000 construction loan to build 4 single family homes in Richmond’s Northside. The homes will be sold to low-to-moderate income homebuyers to attain their dream of homeownership, while preserving affordability in a city neighborhood where home prices are continuing to escalate. The homes will be constructed on W. Fells Street and are expected to be completed by summer of 2019.
What $8.4 million will do for Affordable Housing in Hopewell, VA

Built in 1982, Piper Square Apartments, a property of Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA) has been a place where low-income residents in Hopewell have been able to secure stable housing. Now in 2018, HRHA wants to continue to provide that to current and new tenants at Piper Square and recognizes that the property is ready for updates and renovations so that it compares with current quality affordable housing standards.

That is where Virginia LISC and a fellow Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), Virginia Community Capital (VCC), were able to step in and participate in a construction loan. By teaming up with another area CDFI, together we were able to offer an $8,450,000 construction loan to complete the project.

Construction of the 103 unit project is scheduled to begin in early 2019. Current residents of Piper Square will be provided with vouchers to temporarily relocate while the renovations to their units take place, allowing them to move back in to newly modernized, quality homes.

As a HRHA property, Piper Square offers rental prices based on resident’s income, making it affordable housing in Hopewell. “This rehabilitation is much needed and is going to drastically improve quality of life within the community. We are very excited about it,” Tavaris McCoy, the Community Revitalization Director of Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority said.

The approval of the LISC and VCC participation loan is a huge step towards the completion of this important project, helping HRHA make the upgrades and improvements to the property, and preserving much needed affordable housing.